

Better Beliefs for Christmas

Last Sunday, our Pastor Ron Adema explained how the disciples were unable to understand & accept what Jesus was telling them because His content didn't fit with previously formed beliefs about the mission of Messiah. Our lesson today will briefly review that concept & further discuss it.

The OT prophecy was that the Messiah would establish His earthly kingdom

Jer 23:5-6 "Behold, the days are coming," declares the LORD, "When I shall raise up for David a righteous Branch; And He will reign as king and act wisely And do justice and righteousness in the land. ⁶ "In His days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely; and this is His name by which He will be called, 'The LORD our righteousness. (See Jer 33:15-16; 2Sam 7:11-16)

- The OT predicted the coming of Messiah as a conquering King who will establish an eternal kingdom
- The Church Age is never found or mentioned in the OT – no one knew about it.
- This expectation had been inculcated into the Jewish psyche for thousands of years

Mt 16:21-23; Jn 16:16-21: Jesus continually explained that they had emphasized the kingdom promises and missed the death, burial & resurrection promises (Jn 20:9; 1Cor 15:3-4)

Eph 3:1-9 – God reveals to Paul the mystery doctrines of the Church Age, which in previous generations was not revealed but in the previous ages was hidden in God, namely the joining of Jews & Gentiles in Christ and the insertion (Doctrine/Intercalation) of the church into history.

- The Jews had been inundated with the idea that the Law was righteous & forever.
- Their refusal to erase/replace Law based beliefs created problems in the church for years.

Principles:

1. Once an idea has been:

- a) Understood
- b) Accepted into the heart by faith
- c) Applied to life
- d) Defended against opposing views: this belief becomes an unconscious automatic habit of thinking that will make it difficult to evaluate any other view.

2. Previously accepted beliefs that we hold as non-negotiable render us incapable of accepting any other idea that is different than the one we hold.

3. The heart can only hold to one belief at a time regarding any specific area of life – dissonance.

4. When false ideas are believed and remain in the soul, we can learn the truth, believe it to be the truth, teach others that it is the truth, but be unable to live it ourselves until we reject the false idea from the heart, which then allows the truth to become our true belief lived out in life.

5. The reason we can know the truth & believe it to be the truth, but be unable to consistently apply it to our lives, is that we have previously believed false ideas blocking the truth from becoming our internal reality.

Romans 12:2 And **stop being conformed** to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

Ephesians 4:22-24 that, in reference to your former manner of life, **you lay aside the old self (one belief at a time)**, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit,²³ and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind,²⁴ and **put on the new self (one belief at a time)**, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.

Biblical Examples: Taking off old beliefs

1. Jn 16:16-22 – disciples/Jesus – what previously accepted & held believed idea did they have to reject (put off) to be able to believe what Jesus was telling them?
2. Mt 1:18-23 – Joseph – what belief did Joseph hold to that rendered him incapable of even considering Isa 7:14 as the reality of Mary’s explanation?
 - Self-righteous Law doer; betrayed spouse; afraid of the criticism of peers
3. Mt 2:1-18 – Herod – what beliefs would Herod have needed to reject to be able to accept that the Messiah was a real person who had come to save him from his sins?
 - Unbelievers entrenched in sinful-evil thinking can’t reject it to believe he gospel
4. Lk 1:5-20 Zacharias – vs 18 how will I know this for certain – what beliefs did he have to reject to be able to believe that Elizabeth would become pregnant as an older woman? Notice all of the wonderful news that Gabriel shared with him and what part he actually heard.
5. Lk 1:26-38 – Mary – vs 34 how will this be? When she heard Gabriel, she immediately rejected every normal, common sense; human argument opposed to the angel’s message and accepted his word as truth.
 - Mary was willing to surrender her existing beliefs to God for evaluation to determine if they were true/false to be rejected or further entrenched.
 - Even the most obvious, common sense beliefs in her soul were fair game for her to suspend and replace with the truth about His omnipotence and grace.
6. Mt 26:31-35 – Peter – what belief did he need to reject to be able to believe that he would deny Jesus that night? What belief did he hold so hard that he rejected the word of the Lord?
 - Did Peter believe that God’s plan required him to be loyal to Jesus, even unto death, by exerting his human will to be a faithful friend?
7. Gal 2:11-13 – fearing the party of the circumcision; Peter’s belief that he needed the approval of the Jews caused him to fear losing their approval. What belief(s) did he need to remove to be able to accept the truth that the Gentiles were equal with Jews in Christ?

Application Failures

1. It is possible to know the truth, know that it is true and yet find ourselves being unable to consistently believe the truth to live our lives

Ex: Marriage – Wives submit to husband as the church submits to Christ; Husbands love your wife, like Christ loved the church and gave himself for it. Habitual self-centered beliefs/expectations hinder our ability to apply the truth.

2. Consistent failure to want what it right or naturally chooses what is right in a specific area of life, indicates that we have a previously adopted, habitual, unconscious belief installed in the heart that must be removed for us to naturally believe and apply the truth.

Peter: knew the Lord had to be right, yet couldn’t accept His word that he would deny Christ. He knew that the Gentiles were accepted into the kingdom/family of God, yet his belief that he needed the approval of the Jews caused him to act as a hypocrite.

3. Rejection/removal of false, OM beliefs frees the heart to adopt the truth as the new way of believing, thinking, feeling and acting.

Paul’s ambition to be valued by the Apostles drove him to compromise the message of grace by returning to the temple to please them. He writes from prison about leaving his past ambitions behind and putting off old beliefs so that we can put Christ-like beliefs on.